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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE — Radio Service — OFFICE OF INFORMATION

HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

Friday, October 6, 1939

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "The National Pantry". Information from the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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If you've been reading the grocery ads even more thoroughly than usual this past month, I've some news today that should appeal to you. My news is good news--about food. It's a sort of a bird's eye view of food supplies all over the United States. The source of my information is the United States Department of Agriculture.

First off, this news answers a question that may have entered your mind lately as you have gone about your shopping excursions to nearby grocery stores. That is,--"Just how well stocked is the nation's pantry. Generally, has this been a good year for crops--or a bad year--or a not-one-way-or-the-other year?"

The answer to that is, in short--There is on hand now in the United States--or in prospect--an abundance of practically all kinds of food. There's enough to supply this country amply for the coming year. In certain cases, not only is there plenty of food--but some to spare.

But I'll go into that more fully in a moment. First you'd probably like to know who arrived at this reassuring conclusion--and how they did it.

For years, it has been the work of economists in the Department of Agriculture to keep tab of the agricultural supplies of the nation. To do this, they have developed a special system of crop bookkeeping. And from time to time they publish this information in regular reports.

Each year--along about this time at the end of the harvest season their reports are longer and more informative than usual. For by now, they know what this year's harvest has been for most of the important crops. For crops that are yet to

be gathered they can make reasonable estimates. And to round out the picture, they take into consideration their accounts of the food left over from the last year--being kept for the time being in granaries and in cold storage depots.

This year they have appraised all these food assets--and balanced them against the amount of food the population of this country normally eats. And so it is that--without any crystal gazing or tea leaf reading--they look into the coming year and estimate plentiful food supplies.

And now, to get on with what these economists say about some of the more important commodities.

"Perhaps of first interest are our two great cereal foods--wheat and corn. Ordinarily, the United States produces each year more than enough wheat for this country. 1939 has been no exception. The large amount of wheat left over from last year--plus this year's average crop--add up to abundant supplies for home use, surpluses for export.

"Corn is principally a feed crop. But the large corn supplies on hand now are important to the consumer interested in future supplies of meat, lard, and dairy products. There's about an average corn crop expected this year. Added to this, there's a large carryover from last year.

"The rice situation looks much like the wheat situation, drawn to a smaller scale. Large crops during recent years have resulted in increased stocks carried over each year. With this year's average rice crop--that means there will be ample supplies for domestic use, and surpluses for export."

Next the economists come to sugar. And they continue in the same tone.

"Ample supplies of sugar are also available. On hand now are considerably larger stocks of it than there were last year at this same time. In addition, there is a reserve supply left over from last year that could be used in case of a shortage in the producing areas that supply the market. And to further insure un-

interrupted sugar supplies, all quota restrictions on sugar imports were suspended by presidential proclamation of September 11, 1939."

So much for wheat--corn--rice--and sugar. Now for the meat course.

"As a natural consequence of bountiful feed crops, there has been a sharp increase in livestock, dairy, and poultry products during the past few years.

"Total meat supplies for the rest of 1939--through 1940, promise to be the largest in five years. The biggest news is in pork--which may be back to pre-drought levels during the coming year.

"And--as goes pork--so goes lard. And total supplies of other domestic fats and oils is likely to be large.

"Peak year for dairy products is just over. The coming year shows no indications of topping that record. But it bids fair to be a better-than-average year."

As for poultry the coming year--there's not much change expected. Fruit supplies for the last half of 1939--first half of 1940, should total more than last year. But the estimates for these foods naturally have to be more elastic than those for the more staple foods.

For vegetables, there's a large sweetpotato crop in prospect--a slightly smaller potato crop than there was last year. Truck crops are holding their own, providing ample supplies of other vegetables.

And those are the highlights as I see them of the estimates of the coming year's food supplies from the United States Department of Agriculture.

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